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ABSTRACT

The current status of career counseling theory is explored. The emphasis is on counselee self-knowledge rather than counselor knowledge about and duration of the counselee. Noting that occupational information is abundant and that some methods of accumulating information about counselees' attitudes, values and interests are available, the authors see few indications that much has been done to implement these two into counseling programs. A model for the investigation of counselee vocational attitude changes is presented. The paper concludes with a description of the authors' APGA (1971) demonstration of two very different approaches to group counseling utilizing vocational inventories: (1) an actuarial approach; and (2) an examination of personal-occupational values, positive and negative, as indicated by the results of administering Hall's Occupational Orientation Inventory. (TL)

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CAREER COUNSELING: PREDICTION OR EXPLORATION

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Occupational counseling seems to have experienced a restoration of regard in recent years, if the number of articles pertaining to the subject appearing in recent issues of professional journals can be used as evidence in this regard. Both in the journals and in graduate school classrooms, counseling techniques and instruments are reported and promoted as methods which enhance the efficacy of the counselor's work with his client. However, little empirical research designed to determine the affect on the counselee of different techniques and instruments is being reported. In order to search out affective change, it is necessary to establish a theoretical framework for vocational counseling.

Frank Parson's theory of vocational counseling is still reflected in the policies of the National Vocational Guidance Association (Calia, 1966). Parson's approach to vocational counseling involved knowing the student, knowing the job, and matching the two. This was interpreted by many of the thinkers who succeeded him as being a broken, fragmentary process and, as a result, present theorists emphasize a synthesis of the three steps into one counseling process. The NVGA describes the procedure of vocational counseling as (a) the study of the individual, (b) the study of the occupation, and (c) counseling.

The counseling stage would seem to be the most critical stage for investigation, for there is no single operational definition of counseling. Some would view counseling as realistic matching of the counselee and the occupation, based on cognition of traits and requirements, and controlled by the counselor. Others view counseling

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as a situation in which the counselee is encouraged to explore self within an occupational framework, assuming the self-discovery and integration will occur and cause affective change.

Leading writers in the field state a case for the latter viewpoint. Baer and Roeber (1964) argue that the study of self and occupations are inextricably related. Galinsky and Fast (1966) have chastised counselors for divorcing vocational choice from the internal workings of the individual. Samler (1960) writes, regarding occupational choice, that the counselee cannot make a choice without determining at least preliminarily, what he wants to get out of work. Williamson (1958) states that clients need to identify and understand their moral codes and ethical codes and other value orientations in order to act responsibly. Holland's work (1959) indicates that students choose occupations consistent with their personality types. Roe (1956) cites early family experiences as a determinant to occupational choice. The NVGA in a recent study, emphasizes concern with the individual, perceptions of self, life style, life space, and reality testing of perceptions.

These statements seem to be emphasizing a different goal in vocational counseling: one where counselee self-knowledge is the desired end rather than counselor knowledge about, and direction of the counselee. The emerging picture of vocational counseling becomes one where the counselee is, first, encouraged to know his own values, attitudes, and biases about work, second, encouraged to use this knowledge investigate occupations and the world of work, and third, encouraged to arrive at vocational decisions based on knowledge of vocational requirements and understanding of personal needs.

Information about occupations is plentiful. Government, as well as private agencies, have compiled a wealth of information on salaries, worker traits, worker satisfaction, worker interests and labor trends. This information is available in

publications such as the Dictionary of Occupational Titles and The Occupational Outlook Handbook.

Information about counselees' attitudes, values and personal interests has been more difficult to accumulate than the worker descriptions. E. K. Strong and G. F. Kuder, however, decades ago, made break-throughs into the area of cognitive interests with the Strong Vocational Interest Blank and the Kuder Preference Record, respectively(Williamson, 1966, p. 857). And we expected them to measure the affective domain as well. They didn't.

It would appear that the counselor has, at least, some of the tools to work with in his goal of helping the counselee to reach occupational satisfaction. But it is difficult to measure how well informatin about worker traits on the one hand and counselee attitudes on the other have been joined together and utilized by existing counseling agencies. The gathering of pertinent information does not insure that the information will be used effectively in practice.

Ginzberg (1950), after a systematic search of the literature related to vocational guidance, found that no valid theory, either of occupational choice specifically, or of a generalized choice process, had ever been formulated. He pointed out that even though a great many facts had been gathered, the problem of occupational choice had not been studied systematically from either the point of view of the individual or of the group.

Roe (1956) and Super (1957) among others, answered this indictment with books on the dynamics of vocational choice. The literature which followed these publications indicated that their ideas were adapted within vocational guidance theory. But there is doubt, in at least one quarter, whether these various theories have been adapted in practice. According to Barry and Wolf (1962), Ginzberg's charges were still applicable twelve years later.

This gap between theory and practice over at least the last two decades has posed a dilemma for the counselor, who has been faced with constantly expanding research in two areas: the world of work and personal traits. Little has been done to facilitate the implementation of the two into a counseling program. The counselor has needed some way to deal with occupations in terms of student or counselee. Ginzberg, and Barry and Wolf, have pointed out this paradoxical situation.

Perhaps one explanation of this paradox lies with the widespread use of the "actuarial type" interest inventories. The interest inventory has been developed to help bridge the gap between worker-to-be and worker. By comparing item and scale responses of one population, for example, outdoor workers, the student can make inferences about his adaptability to enter a specific "family" of jobs that involve working outdoors.

This approach is clearly an external one for the items have not been validated as having a connection with the nature and performance of specific jobs and its connection with the counselee's internal value system has not been considered. Ginzberg (1950) pointed out this discrepancy:

> But all these tests (interest inventories) can tell us, oddly enough, almost nothing about the nature of the choice process. They deflect attention from the multiplicity of factors which are involved. They contribute to an artificial simplication which concentrates on a mechanical matching of capacities and interests with certain norms. (p.174)

Part of this oversimplification seems to lie in the fact that, generally, inventory norms' are established using an adult population. Strong (1966) believes that interests change in youngsters and therefore are not comparable to an occupation group until at least early college age. Kuder makes no such differentiation. Nevertheless, similarity of interests between worker-to-be and worker seem to be desirable for occupational satisfaction, but when responses to interest inventories are used as the chief criteria for occupational choice problems arise. If a counselee, through lack of experience or knowledge of occupational requirements, makes a voca-

tional decision only because of a "style of living" set rather than evaluation of himself and comparison of that self to job requirements, then the process of vocational counseling has been circumvented. Choosing an occupation on the basis of similarity of interests which are external to the job ignores the complex set of factors which seem to be important to job satisfaction.

Kuder (1966) now recognizes the danger of overinterpreting results:

> As I have come to see it, the main objection to listing families of occupations is that doing so has the effect of allowing information known about average relationships existing in groups to influence individual decisions more than specific information about the individual himself. (p. 74).

According to present theory, effective counseling must take place at a different level than inventoried interests. Rather than dealing with the interests that characterize the workers already employed in a family of occupations, many indications point to the belief that the counselee must examine his own needs and evaluate them as a frame of reference for choosing occupations. This is supported by Thompson's contention that the counselor should

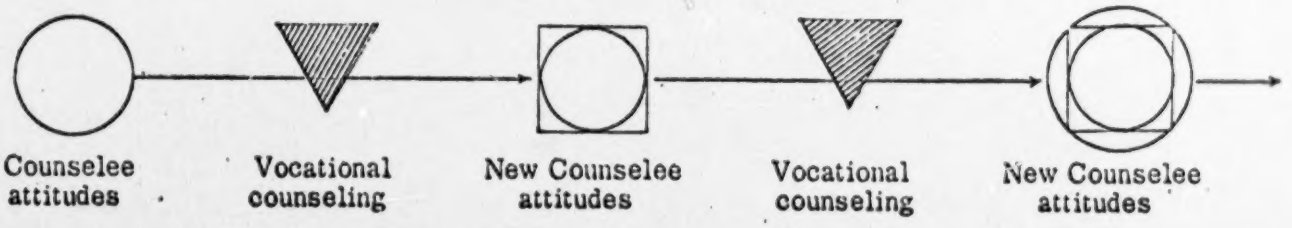
> ". . .respect the felt needs of the client, give him some appropriate tests, and use the discussion and intepretation of test results as an opportunity for the client to learn for himself that there are more important factors other than his aptitudes and interests. In the process, also, the total picture will become more apparent to both the client and the counselor" (1960, p. 355).

From this it would seem logical to assume that some tests are "more appropriate" than others.

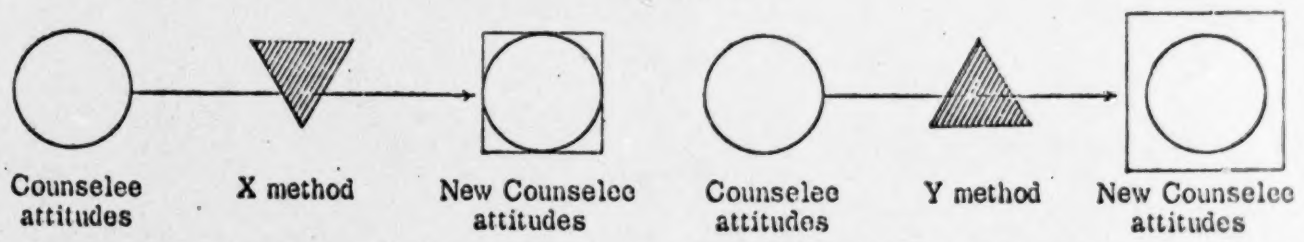
As pointed out earlier, the "more appropriate" tests have not been identified. Little research has been carried out to examine the affective impact on the counselee of a vocational inventory and counseling. The general pattern of study reported in the journals has been to determine how well communication of scale scores has been carried out in counseling. A more pertinent approach would investigate the effects of vocational counseling on counselee attitudes. Does the counselee change in this

respect, as a result of vocational counseling?

If vocational counseling brings about change in counselee attitudes, the process should be continuous with more or different changes resulting from each counseling treatment. The following model graphically demonstrates this idea:



A corollary idea would state that different methods of vocational counseling, such as the use of different inventories, will bring about different degrees of change in counselee attitudes as depicted in the following model:



DEMONSTRATION

The demonstration which you are about to see via videotape follows this model of investigation and presents two very different approaches to group counseling with "vocational inventories." One method involves the actuarial approach and is based on the results of the administration of the Kuder Preference Record (KPR, Kuder, 1956). The publishers of the KPR recommend that interpretation be made on the basis of patterns of choices as they compare to job families. The second method involves examination of extreme personal-occupational values, positive and negative, as indicated by the results of the administration of the Hall Occupational Orientation Inventory (HOOI, Hall, 1965). The author of the HOOI recommends an ideographic examination of individual items on the inventory.

The theory of the interaction of personal needs and vocational choice has been proposed by Roe (1956). It would seem that, often, needs have a neurotic connotation and are seen as applicable only for the abnormal individual. This is unfortunate because theorists interpret needs as a great force for all in the choice of an occupation. As Roe (1956) points out: ". . .no other factor in a person's life can satisfy as many of these needs as an occupation does."

Thus, if the counselor accepts Roe's theory, his first task would be to help the counselee become aware of his internal value structure and the associate needs.

It is hypothesized that:

> ". . .vocational counseling should go further than dealing with facts and information on a logical and rational basis by taking into account counselee perceptions and motivations, and by assisting the counselee as necessary to clarify, modify and accept his feelings and attitudes." (Thompson, 1960, p. 351)

The theoretical assumption underlying this design is that recognition, examination, and clarification of personal vocational values by the counselee will change his frame of reference for making vocational choices.

The videotape follows a comparative format to give the viewer some basis to evaluate his own judgments. The sequence of segments are as follows:

(3 min.) 1. Counselor gives the group (high school students) directions for interpreting the KPR.

(3 min.) 2. Counselor gives the group (high school students) directions for interpreting the HOOI.

(5 min.) 3. Group counseling with the KPR.

(5 min.) 4. Group counseling with the HOOI.

(5 min.) 5. Recall debriefing by interrogator to seek out counselee reactions to counseling session (KPR).

(5 min.) 6. Recall debriefing by interrogator to seek out counselee reactions to counseling session (HOOI).

The playing of the videotape Career Counseling: Prediction or Exploration took place at this point. The following brief typescripts of the counseling session are included for those not having viewed the tape.

GROUP COUNSELING - KUDER PREFERENCE RECORD

Co: *The topic of our discussion is the profile sheet of the Kuder Preference Record. What's your reaction to it? Do you have questions about any of your scores?*

Frieda: *I was surprised at my computational score. It is one of the highest, but I don't plan to work in a job that is involved with math and figures and the like.*

Co: *So you are surprised that the inventory showed something you didn't know - and you are questioning what it means?*

Frieda: *Right.*

Co: *Did anybody have two high scores or several high scores?*

Frieda: *I was high in Computational and Social Service.*

Co: *Can you think of anything you might do which would combine these high scores for a job?*

Frieda: *I dunno. A math teacher, maybe?*

GROUP COUNSELING - HALL OCCUPATIONAL ORIENTATION INVENTORY

Counselees are discussing an item on the inventory that one counselee has checked an extreme response-essential - #64. "You work with people who are healthy and normal."

Lee: *Yeh - but still you have to keep yourself from going nuts. You have to keep yourself happy. If you work with sick people all the time----*

Donna: *That's what's wrong with people these days. Nobody is willing to help others.*

Lee: *No, that's not what I mean. Look, I'm saying that sure it's important, but as for a job -- it's not for me.*

Mark: *But what if everybody took that point of view?*

Lee: *Yeh I know - but charity begins in the home. We can all do something to help others but does it have to be in a job?*

Co: *I'd like to break in at this point to tell you what I think is going on. It seems to me that Lee has tried to state a value that he holds toward work and perhaps an occupation. And Mark and Donna don't share that particular value with him so they are trying to get him to change this value about working with healthy normal people. Does anybody agree?*

In debriefing sessions, the counselees seemed more excited, more involved and more stimulated by the HOOI value exploration set. The question, so what?, is always a valid one. Does this method provide more counselee growth? Are the one group of counselees better prepared to make occupational choices than the others?

Attempts to measure statistical differences require elaborate sophistication and even then do not often show differences (Tarrier, 1968). But what of our professional observation skills? Is it enough to "see" differences? Is it enough to feel differences? And finally is it reason enough for a counselor to follow one method because it is simply more fun?

Statistical means to measure attitudes and interests have been designed from a predictive base. Perhaps the "counselor in a changing world" needs to examine the concept of prediction and weigh it against the concept of exploration. And if exploration is better, to then design new measures and new methods to help young people better understand themselves and the place of work in the lives of all of us.

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